

We are selfish, vain, narcissistic, insecure, introspective, overweight, ugly—and we don't give a damn about politics. Self-improvement is our preoccupation, hedonism our philosophy, looking out for No. 1 our theme. That last trait especially speaks to what passes for the politics of the moment.

Evidence? you say. Why, it's clearly spelled out for all to see each Sunday morning in the pages of *The New York Times Review*. That's right, the elite, esoteric *NYT Book Review*, the authoritative journal of the book business, the Bible of the trade. There, carefully compiled from computer-processed sales figures covering 1,400 bookstores in every region of the country, are the latest best sellers. They are, I submit, an incomparable guide to mass tastes, and to the real politics of the late 1970s.

Last week, for instance, the nonfiction

"Inner Skiing," about improving your membership of a Body Builder," which gives tips from the superstar of the film "Pumping Iron."

Five of the remaining nine best sellers qualify as escapism: "All Things Wise and Wonderful," the adventures of a Yorkshire vet, ranks in sales just above "Gnomes," which is all about the little people, while "The Second Ring of Power" deals with a spiritual quest and encountering a witch, and "The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady" presents—well, just what its title implies.

The last in this category is a rendering of Alaska, our final frontier. This one, John McPhee's "Coming Into the Country," stands alone among all the books. It promises to become a classic, and to be read long after this dreary current list has been forgotten.

It may be that another big seller comes under the escapism category, but it's hard to tell what message "The Amityville Hor-

ror" has to offer.

It's also hard to tell what message "The Montauk Incident" has to offer.

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No politics consider "The Amityville Horror" a political

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Ban Is Tightened On Hiring Spies In Peace Corps

Associated Press

The Peace Corps, intent on avoiding the least appearance of impropriety, is reorganizing and tightening its rules barring spies and former spies from its service.

The regulations are aimed at avoiding "providing any credence to charges that the Peace Corps is a front for intelligence activities of the United States government."

Such charges have been made on occasion by foreign governments despite the fact that the corps, which provides volunteer services to developing nations, has had a policy of avoiding connections with the intelligence community since it was founded in 1961.

Officials said the restructuring of the rules is not connected with either these charges or recent publicity about improper actions of U.S. intelligence agents abroad.

Currently the Peace Corps has 6,852 volunteers in service in 62 countries.

The new rules list a number of agencies whose former employees are permanently barred from employment and volunteer work in the Peace Corps, and others whose employees cannot join the corps for at least 10 years.

House Rejects Prop.

By Mary Russell
Washington Post Staff Writer

A White House-backed bill authorizing the president to nearly double the size of his top personal staff was defeated in the House yesterday.

Republicans jumped on the bill as contrary to a pledge by President Carter to decrease the size of the White House staff. They also gleefully twisted their Democratic colleagues with their own words taken from debates in past years when Democrats were complaining about the size of the White House staff under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

And finally, they accused the White House of bringing the bill up under a procedure that prevented amendment in order to protect the size of the staff increase.

The procedure preventing members from amending a bill requires a two-thirds vote for passage and is usually used for noncontroversial legislation. But the 207-to-188 vote yesterday came closer to outright defeat than the two-thirds needed for passage, as 65 Democrats joined 123 Republicans in voting against the measure.

Rep. Herbert Harris (D-Va.), the prime sponsor of the measure, said he

would now take the bill to the Committee, the normal procedure for bringing bills to the floor and that requires only a majority vote for passage.

Harris blamed bad publicity for defeat. He said the bill should be viewed not as increasing the White House staff but as an attempt to numerical ceiling on top staff something that has not been done before.

The bill would increase from 100 the number of positions in the president's personal staff at the grade level (GS16 and above, up from \$42,500 to \$57,500). It also authorizes hiring unlimited personal consultants, and staff for the vice president and vice president.

"The White House wanted a general authorization with no numbers," he said. "They thought a specific requirement was being put on them that had never been put on anyone else."

Harris also contended that White House would have to act for the first time for the employee "borrows" from other government agencies and report to Congress.

Howardall Burns Roast in Protest

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